MISTAKES

OF

R. G. INGERSOLL.

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BY

INSANE JOHNNY.

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PREFACE.

For fifteen years I have watched the men of professed science and secular views; and I have often sympathized with them in their opposition to orthodox theology, yet strange to say I could never indorse their ideas of Jesus Christ or the Bible generally.

My father was a preacher of the Methodist body, and I was consequently brought up in that church. After I arrived at years of discretion, I found that I could not indorse all of their ideas, and I thought that the New Testament favored my ideas in preference to theirs. I have labored on in this way for many years, isolated from both, reading and studying whenever I could get leisure apart from my duties to my family. I always objected to the vulgar interpretation of the teachings of Christ by the secularists, and I found myself on no better ground when I turned to the orthodox interpretation.

I have struggled on in this way for many years, hoping that men would be found to harmonize with me, but all in vain.

R. G. Ingersoll gave me some hope, but I am now again prostrated I had great hopes that I would hear something grand and noble when I heard of the published lecture of R. G. Ingersoll, on the well known text: "*What must we do to be saved?*" But alas! I am utterly disappointed, and therefore I have taken up my pen and have in the following pages endeavored to show mistakes of R. G. Ingersoll. If I have failed, I hope he, or some one, will be good enough to correct me, for I am an earnest inquirer after truth for the sake of humanity. I yearn to see the day

> When man to man the world over,
> Shall be one brotherhood;
> Working hand and heart together
> For a universal good.

I do not believe in brute force to accomplish anything, but I believe in sufficient force to bring either high or low to justice, and in the justice of any force to resist tyranny when it will not submit to the voice of the people.

Insane Johnny.

If this is appreciated, I will next write on the subject, "What must we do to be saved?"

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MISTAKES OF R. G. INGERSOLL.

"*What must we do to be saved?*"—R. G. INGERSOLL.

IN examining the little book bearing the above title, there is no doubt that there are many things to be found therein that are worthy of the indorsement of all good men. For example: "I am in favor of absolute freedom of thought; in the realm of mind every one is monarch; every one is robed, sceptered and crowned, and every one wears the purple robe of authority." The last clause of this sentence is rather ambiguous; otherwise the sentence is sublime.

It might be questioned whether the mind of the minority is crowned and wears the purple robe of authority. A man may wear the purple robe of authority over his own mind, but how can that benefit him if his views and thoughts have to be crushed out by a powerful majority?

It it be replied that it is only religious matters that are meant, then my reply is: If we have to put down a religious tyranny (so-called) and set up a political one, then for my part I do not care for the change I would rather trust myself to the religious element than to the political one.

Freedom of thought is of no utility if it must not be the precursor to action. If a man feels that he is injured by an unjust law, and yet must submit to that law, what good does free thought do him? If R. G. Ingersoll is one of those men who believe that the majority ought to rule in all cases, and that the minority has no right to resist the tyranny of the majority, then I want to know if this is not might against right—the same in a republic as in a kingdom or popedom? If the same, why blame those powers for punishing the opposition of those we call martyrs?

Such doctrine as this: "I belong to the republic of intellectual liberty, and only those are good citizens of that republic who depend upon reason and upon persuasion, and only those are traitors who resort to brute force," is very good doctrine for those clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, but to those oppressed it is not very palatable; no more now than in the days of Christ, or in the days of Catholic ascendency.

"Priests have invented a crime called blasphemy, and behind that crime hypocrisy has crouched for thousands of years." Legislators have invented crimes called treason and conspiracy, and behind these crimes have tyranny, villainy, robbery and murder crouched from time

immemorial, and their moral strength has always rested on this doctrine of R. G. Ingersoll.

Does any one suppose for a moment that we can persuade a powerful aristocracy (who believe they are better in every respect and have a right, by birth, to plunder the masses by legislative enactments), to do right,—to cease living off the people, and to go to work like honest men? Let past experience answer. And please tell us what difference there is between a republican aristocracy and a monarchial one? Oliver Goldsmith says: "If we must have tyrants let us have as few and as far off as possible."

R. G. Ingersoll says: "There is but one blasphemy, and that is injustice." Can I persuade R. G. that it is unjust for a certain class of men in this world to enact laws to enrich themselves, and drive to hell, death or perdition all those who suffer thereby, if they attempt to resist it? not, of course, by Smithfield flames, but by starvation, conspiracy acts, and tramp acts. What makes the difference between the slave and the despot? Is it not the sword? If we could persuade the despot to do right it would be sublime; we would very soon have none. But we cannot, and if we disobey them they send fire and sword after us. What must we do? Submit, and still be slaves, and try to persuade? This will not do; no, never do. This is sophistical Christianity, Robert, without the hell-fire and brimstone of the future, doled out by an avenging God, but with the present hell-fire and damnation of Armstrong's big guns, and conspiracy acts, against innocent and simple-minded humanity.

On page 14, R. G. tells a story about a Jewish gentleman eating some bacon, and God making such a fuss about it. I tell the following story as a set-off against it.

There was a man who went into his neighbor's house one day and told his neighbor that a tyrant oppressed them; that indeed a whole gang of tyrants had conspired together to keep them in a degraded and slavish condition, in order that they (the tyrants) might live without labor; and that they had made some laws which would compel honest laborers to work from morn till night, all the days of their lives, for a mere pittance—scarcely enough to sustain life—while they (the tyrants), by this scheme, intended to live in luxury, ease and prodigality; and he tried to persuade his neighbor to join him to resist those tyrannical conspirators, and to get all honest laborers to join them, to put this unjust scheme down, and demand just laws. But the tyrants sent to their gods, and their artillery was sent out—the fire began to belch, and the cannon roared and thundered, and the voices of the gods thundered forth the edict: down with the scoundrels! sweep them off the face of the earth! the conspirators! the vagabonds! the villains! the infernal rebels! the communists! And the men were thunder-struck, and said: "My God! what a fuss for simply asking for enough to eat, enough to wear, and a little comfort for our fam-

ilies in return for our hard labor, which, on the principle of justice, they have no right to at all."

I now pass on to notice R. G.'s respect for Christ:

"And let me say here, once for all, that for the man Christ I have infinite respect. * * * Had I lived at that time I would have been his friend, and should he come again he would not find a better friend than I would be." Is R. G. really in earnest? Let us see. Christ's idea was to teach men to suffer for the truth, and to teach laws of justice and humanity, buoying them up with the hope that they would be rewarded in heaven, if not on earth. R. G. emphatically declares that there is no hell. If there is no hell, there can be no heaven. If there is no punishment for the wicked, there can be no reward for the righteous. If the same people must live together in the next world that now live here, then there will be slaves and despots the same as here. Can that be heaven any more than here? If all who are willing to do right here—to share the burdens as well as the blessings, and not want twice as much as their fellows; nay, in some cases ten hundred times as much, and no better than their fellows, nor doing so much useful labor—I say if these true, honest people, who wish to live and let live—who wish to do unto others as they would be done by—who wish to love their neighbors as themselves, to strive to make everybody happy, not in words, but in deeds, can get to a place away from those greedy, avaricious, overbearing, lazy, usurious vagabonds, then it would be heaven. If they cannot get a place by themselves then it will be endless misery. And on the other hand, if those who will not do right in this world are compelled to do right in the next, then their misery begins: and there is an end to R. G.'s moral suasion. God must compel them—not very much like heaven. Now, if there is not one place for the righteous, and another for the unrighteous, then Christ was deceived, and consequently a deceiver--insane—swallowed up in superstition; and yet we hear R. G. saying: "For the man Christ I have infinite respect." What does he respect him for? For his foolishness and superstition? It will not do, it will not do. This milk and water will not do.

We now pass to chapter second, and the first we notice is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Good!" says R. G.; but we are impelled to ask, how can they be blessed with the kingdom of heaven if there is none? It cannot apply to this world for if there is any heaven in this world it is the haughty, overbearing spirit, and slavish sycophant, that gets it. We have no other way of accounting for this discrepancy but by considering it a mistake of R. G. Ingersoll.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "Good!" says R. G. R. G. does not consider this an interpolation, and yet on the principles of logic, it is as miserable a sentence as could be put in print. How can a just person be a merciful person? If a law is

just and I break that law, and I am forgiven, is that justice? Would it not destroy the law? Would R. G. forgive me and then punish the next that broke the law? Is that the justice he believes in? I wish in a friendly manner to tell R. G. that this is a mistake. Mercy and justice never kissed each other but once, and that was when the world had sinned against God to such an extent as to deserve eternal punishment, and God in the person of his son provided himself an adequate substitute for the world's crime; got justice from his son and by his mercy set the world free on condition that they believe, and obey his commandments—(orthodox theology); and this of course R. G. does not believe in. This is simply another mistake of R. G's.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake" (that's me a little), "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Good!" says R. G. How can the pure in heart see God any more than the impure? If there is no God and no future state, neither will see him, and if there is a future, there must be two states, one for the pure and one for the impure—heaven and hell, a place of happiness necessarily made so by the pure being together, and hell necessarily made so by the impure being together. To be called the children of God and not to have the benefits of even the children of men, is not very desirable. I fail to see how any person can be blessed in having a title to a place which is not in existence. Next:

"If ye forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you will not forgive men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." R. G. says I accept this. If R. G. is in earnest, why is he continually bringing up before the people the persecuting spirit of past ages. If I say I forgive a man, would it not look like mockery if I were upbraiding, not only him, but his children and children's children, on every possible occasion, and even making a business of it? I say would this be compatible with forgiveness? I think not.

But again, is it possible to forgive an injury if there is not reparation for the injury? I answer no. To thus forgive injuries is to corrupt even God. There is no alternative between stern justice and corruption. If we forgive men they will learn to do wrong in the hope of forgiveness. If I deserve death I should not be allowed to live. The question is, do I deserve death? If the just answer is yes, it is a crime to forgive me, and the establishment of a precedent for wrong doing. If I deserve to be imprisoned, it is a crime to commute the sentence. If you commute the sentence for me, you must commute it for all, or you are partial, unjust—not to be trusted. Justice is stern and inflexible.

"And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, shall receive an hundred fold and shall inherit eter-

nal life." Says R. G. most emphatically, "Christ never said it, never!" Why not? How many thousands have done it? All philosophers agree that the best construction that can be rendered must be put on a man's saying. Thousands followed Luther, and many suffered for it. Was it for Luther's sake? certainly not; but for what they conceived to be the truth that Luther taught; and it needs no proof that many left both houses and lands, wives and children, fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, for what they conceived to be the truth. They did not, as R. G. and others would, for their own purpose like to put it, forsake their houses and relations; but they chose rather to leave them than sacrifice their conscience—their own conceptions of the truth; yes, and sacrificed their own lives also.

They did not wish to do so, neither did Christ teach them to do so, but commended them for so doing, and promised a greater reward for their heroism. They still honored their fathers and mothers, but they were compelled to forsake the one for the other. They were compelled to give up either their relations or what they conceived to be the truth. Huss, Latimer and Ridley did it. Bruno, Servitus, Penn and good old Roger Williams did it. I think Holyoke had a touch of it, and Bradlaugh and Anne Besant. Wesley did not escape. But enough, my object is only to show R. G. is mistaken. Next, we will turn to chapter third.

"And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." R. G. says, "This is the most infamous passage in the Bible, Christ never said it. No sensible man ever said it." Let us see. What is it to believe? Can we conceive of a man believing anything without being incited to action? I think not. Take an example. Here is a man who believes that *Nihilism* is right in Russia. Can he conscientiously believe that, and not do anything toward the cause? I think not. Can a true man conscientiously believe that it is wrong and be absolutely dormant? I think not. Then belief incites to action. If then the gospel consisted of the good things which R. G. has already indorsed, why would it be infamous to say, he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned? Does not R. G. know that Biblical scholars agree that the word *damned* means *condemned*, and does he not see that the sense of the text warrants this conclusion?

If so, then is it not plain that any movement for the benefit of mankind might appropriate this text? but put the worst construction you can on it, and if there is any such a thing as damnation, it certainly could not be infamous to say, those that believe shall be saved, and those that believe not, shall be damned. Do not men save themselves from infamy and execration by standing heroically for the right, while others are damned to everlasting infamy and execration for taking sides against truth, justice and humanity? If it be replied

that the gentleman is taking the theological construction, I wish to know how a man, who, as Christ did, honestly believed in a future state and rewards and punishments for the righteous and unrighteous, could be infamous for teaching that those who believed should be saved, and those who believed not, should be damned? Or why should a man be shocked at the idea that God will banish a man from the good eternally, if he can conceive that God will make some happy to all eternity?

We have already shown that if there is a place for the good, there must be a place for the bad, because the bad and the good cannot live together and be happy. If, then, it was only annihilation for the bad, while the good were blessed with eternal life, would it not be *even* famous to teach he that believeth, and acteth accordingly, shall be saved, while he that believeth not, and acteth accordingly, shall be damned.

Did not the immortal Lincoln say, in effect, to the South, "He that believeth in the Union shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned?"

What can a man lose that is of more value to him than his life; if he is condemned to death, or to a dungeon for life, is he not damned enough? And is it not, as far as this life is concerned, forever?

Now suppose that a man had committed a crime justly demanding the penalty of death, or a dungeon for life, who would feel for him? Truth could not. Truth has no pity for untruth; they are deadly enemies to each other, and it is only affectation to say we love the man but not the deed. We might as well say, we love the cause but not the effect.

If a man earns eternal annihilation, or eternal damnation, it is affectation to say that it will make a man unhappy who has earned eternal life. We might as well say that it would make a man unhappy who had earned the confidence and the best gift of the American people, because another had earned their execration and banishment from them by death.

R. G. says, "No man can control his belief. You hear evidence for and against, and the integrity of the soul stands at the scales and sees which side rises and which side falls. You cannot believe as you wish, you must believe as you must."

If R. G. is correct, then who is culpable for any action whatever? A man must either believe that he is right when he does what others call wrong, or he must do it in spite of his belief—believing one thing and doing another, and if he can control his actions in this way it looks as if he could control his belief; but if he cannot control his belief he cannot control his actions. Actions follow earnest belief. Sir Humphrey Davy conceived the idea of the miner's safety lamp, and he believed that he could make an instrument that would be beneficial to the miner; he went to work on the

strength of his belief and accomplished his object. He no longer believed he could do it. He knew he could. "Faith (or belief) is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." The evidence we have of anything we believe is simply the evidence of our own senses, our ideality—imagination; but the evidence we see in the scales is demonstrative of truth. A person's belief is governed a great deal by wish or desire.

Two men start out some morning in search of a missing horse. They look earnestly in every direction; they see something away off, and they look and look till they think they see the horse, the more they look, and their hope and wish acting with their imagination, they think they see him stir; after a while they believe it is the horse they are in search of; they start on in full confidence, but they find, when their demonstrative faculties come in contact with the object, it is only a peculiar old stump. But when they find the horse, they no longer say I believe it is he, but there he is for sure this time. And this is the reason why we have so many different beliefs about things that cannot be demonstrated. A man has so much self esteem, little casuality, and little conscientiousness he is easily led to imagine that he is better than other people, and after awhile he believes he is, and his belief grows so strong that he will have a man put to death, who in reality is better than he, for presuming to be his equal.

That "man must believe as he must" does not alter the fact that his belief is based on his wish and imagination. If he believes as he must, then he cannot help his wish and imagination.

God does not punish for sin against himself no more than a king or a republic does. It is for crime against his fellow man that God says he will punish man.

If "every letter of this passage has been sword and fagot, every word dungeon and chain," what caused all the brutal persecution before it was ever heard of, or that church came into power. I want to tell R. G. this is a mistake and that Christians never did persecute anybody. Christ never taught them to persecute anybody; all the persecution that the world has seen has been by legislative enactments, and not carried out by Christians simply because they were Christians but because it was the law; because the people were not fit for any higher standard of morals; because they did not understand the sublime spirit of Christ.

Roberts, a barrister of England, once said that "tyranny and oppression were the food that God had used to bring men to their senses," and it would appear that without it there can be no progress, for it seems as though it were the schoolmaster to bring us to good, and the would-be gods of this world had better take warning, they had better believe that injustice begets injustice, and if they do not believe and get baptized with the truth, they will find after it is too late that their damnation is sure. Christ taught a practical doctrine, and so

plain that a wayfaring man though a fool in other matters need not err therein. He foretold the damnation of Jerusalem. Another example: and one of the scribes came and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him which is the first commandment of all? and Jesus answered him, (see Mark xii, 28-34.) Can anything be more sublime than this? Are the objectors to the past and present state of the churches prepared to do this—to love their neighbors as themselves? Do not say it cannot be done, but rather say the truth—we do not want to do it, because it can be done. In conversation with a minister some years ago, he said we could not love our neighbors as ourselves; and here is the illustration which he drew: "If you and another man were fast in a hole and could not get out, would you forget yourself and help him out." It will be evident that if I did that—saved my neighbor in preference to myself, I would love my neighbor better than myself. If I got out myself and then helped him out, then I would love him as myself. If I wish him to have the same comforts in this world as I have, then I love him as myself; but if I get up some scheme to get out of men's earnings from ten to ten thousand times as much as they get for themselves, then I love myself ten, or ten thousand times better than my neighbors; if the latter, I would be a tyrannical despot, if the former a communist. Christ was a communist, and every Christian must necessarily be one, otherwise he is an ignorant professor. A communist is simply a man who believes in co-operation, and that every one must work for the good of the whole, each to share the burden as well as the blessing. This is the doctrine of Christ and his apostles as against the doctrines of despotism. Whether they emanate from the pontificial chamber, or republican legislative hall, they are synonymous, and they are tyrants who help perpetuate them whether republicans or kings; and in Christ's stead I repeat this text again, to everybody, "Go ye into all the world and preach this gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Ye hypocrites, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. We have had already too much breaking down of one power to set up another. If we must have a change we want a radical change—a thorough restitution of all things, and we want preachers to practice what they preach, or, in the language of Christ, we say to all, both political and religious, "Ye hypocrites how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

We now pass to chapter ninth, on page 73. R. G. says, "That church (the Presbyterian) teaches that infinite innocence was sacrificed for me! I do not want it! * * I do not wish to be a winged pauper of the skies."

I am glad he does not. I hope he honestly earns all he gets on earth. I am confident he wont be an angel of the skies unless he earns it. I don't like to be personal, but is he earning, or has he earned an honest

living in this world; say, as he would have to do if all men were as witty and wise as he is?

If we were rid of all the churches, and all the preachers, and had R. G.'s in stead, I want to know how much per cent we would gain by the books? As to not wanting innocence to suffer for him, let me tell him candidly that infinite innocence has always suffered, and is suffering now, for him and such as he. What legitimate labor is he doing for a living; is he plowing or sowing, or helping to make a plow, or in any shape, either directly or indirectly, making one blade of grass to grow? Let me tell him, and all such as he, that they are paupers of the earth—that some one else is working to keep them, and they are not returning an equivalent. If a man is living off the profits of his property some one else makes those profits, consequently such are paupers. When the men of this world get as wise as he is (but I think I hear him say they never will) those fellows will all have to come down and work for an honest living, instead of living off other people. I do not, nor would I, begrudge a man pay for legitimate intellectual work; but when men get knowledge and courage enough to demand justice, we wont need any more than any man qualified will be able to perform besides working for an honest living.

If R. G. loves the man and hates the deed, why does he not agitate for the repeal of all criminal laws and rest on persuasion? If he cannot possibly live in heaven, and enjoy it while some rascal must endure hell, the place of his own choosing and just earning, though it were his own mother, how can he be happy now, when he sees so many people in hell, while he is in heaven, comparatively speaking? If he is so sympathetic a being that he can *sympathize with devils*, how can he be happy at all by seeing so many of his fellow beings suffer pain during life, and suffering premature death by over-work, and all the consequence of unjust laws, which could be easily changed, if it were not for him, and such as he, continually preaching against it? The idea that some men have; namely, why cannot they do as I do, is as good logic as it would be for the President to say: why, I got to be President, why don't they all get to be President? Because a man is doing the drudgery while another is doing finer and easier work, is that a reason that he should have twenty or thirty times less pay, and less comfort?

If R. G. will take the pains he will find as much suffering among innocent humanity as would burst his heart, if he is the man he professes to be; and instead of trying to benefit them he is robbing them of all the consolation they have; viz., their hope and consolation that in the next world they will be freed from the tyrant's grasp—safe in heaven,—while they see the tyrant writhing in hell, calling for a drop of water to cool his parched tongue, which cannot be granted him; and which he certainly does not deserve.

"The present moment is our ain,
The neist we never saw."

Or may never see; so that the present, as far as we are concerned, is ours, and man wants all the happiness now, just now, that he has a right for; and those who believe in civilization, which means nothing if it does not mean even-handed justice against old barbarism—getting all a man can by superior force, like the hog—must try (to prove they are not hypocrites) to destroy all unjust laws which rob the hard-working population out of their just earnings, and make them slaves, while a certain class—a few, are enabled to live in woeful extravagance and prodigality, while they never help to earn anything at all.

If R. G. thinks this state of things can stand he is most miserably devoid of true philosophy and logic. Doctors of medicine, both for the physical body and body politic, have been tinkering, through ages of ignorance, the effect instead of the cause; but the modern scientist in physiology says: in order to cure disease we must find out and remove the cause, and the effect will cease; that it is of no avail to treat the effect; and I think this is an axiom. And the doctors of the body politic will have to adopt the same principle, and remove the cause, whatever it be, or the body politic cannot be preserved from terrible epidemics. It is imbecility to stand and weep, and hesitate to take a limb off, when you see that if it is not done the whole body will go to destruction; and it is just as much so to talk of saving the gangrenous part of the body politic, and the body not to be destroyed; and it is as easy to persuade the gangrenous part of the physical body to give up its hold as to persuade the gangrene of the body politic to quietly give up its hold. It must be purged out or cut out.

I would recommend to R. G. Ingersoll the doctrines of Jefferson and John Stuart Mill. (They want to be studied by the present generation.) And until he studies them thoroughly, and refutes them, to cease leading the public astray by his crying sophistry, unphilosophical and illogical silliness. Let me impress on his mind that truth and justice cannot weep on account of the destruction of untruth and injustice, not even if it had to suffer in a thousand hells to all eternity. Immortal beings are not to be supposed less just than mortal beings. If in another world the term of life is eternal, then every other thing will be in harmony therewith; and when they sentence a man for life, it is eternal; and if punishment is connected therewith it must be eternal. And if, when I go to the eternal state, I have no other character to present than an overbearing, outrageous and extortionary one—one who would never believe in justice—one that always exercised lordship over my fellow, by abuse of power; what do you suppose they would do? Do you suppose they would say: well, you have

been a most shameful character in the place you have left, but we will give you a trial? No, sir: infinite wisdom knows that—

> "Sinners that grow old in sin,
> Are hardened in their crimes."

And would reply: "Depart ye cursed," we tolerate no such characters here, we love our neighbors as ourselves.

If we have no heaven to hope for in the future, where God will do us justice, then, sir, we must cease to persuade, and demand justice here; and rather than suffer injustice at those tyrants' hands, nobly die,—the innocent for the guilty. And he is an ignorant sycophant, and a cringing, cowardly slave, who, after his eyes are opened, does not make that demand.

> "O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide,
> That streamed through" Washington's "undaunted heart;
> Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
> Or nobly die, the second glorious part.
> [The patriots' God, peculiarly thou art,
> His friend, inspirer, guardian and reward,]
> Oh never, never," human rights "desert;
> But still the patriot and the patriot bard,
> In bright succession rise, our ornament and guard."